

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In the current era of rapid information exchange and the dominance of digital media, language plays a crucial role in shaping how social realities are constructed and understood. Discourse Analysis is an important approach in studying language because it focuses on how language is used to construct and present social conditions in society. Discourse analysis is based on the view that social conditions are not neutral, but are shaped through language (Gergen, 2018). Therefore, this approach examines not only what is said in a text, but also how and why that meaning is said, as well as how social, political, and cultural conditions also affect the communication process (Putri, 2025). According to Risdianto & Salatiga (2016) Discourse Analysis studies texts and looks at their relationship to the situation and culture around them, including how texts are created due to the influence of social life and how the texts can be used to identify events that occurred, ways of thinking, and beliefs of the community. Thus, Discourse Analysis plays an important role in revealing the relationship between language, power, and social practices.

This approach is aligned with Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), which views that ideological messages are not only conveyed through words, but also through various visual modes (Tang, 2018). MCDA is an approach that develops theories and ways of analyzing discourse using

various types of communication signs or symbols, such as language, images, spatial layout, and building design. According to Çoşkun (2015) in the media—especially on television, movies, magazines, and the internet—images have a very important part. Images are often used to convey things that are unable to be fully expressed through language. Texts in the media usually combine language and visual strategies that look natural or normal, but can actually be ideological and used to shape perspectives on certain events or figures. Thus, MCDA aims to expose and criticize how meanings or messages are conveyed through various forms of communication, especially visual ones.

As the form of communication that does not only use verbal language develops, the study of Discourse Analysis then develops into Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). MDA shows how meaning is constructed through the use of different modes of communication, not just through language. This approach is used to analyze meanings built through a combination of various modes of communication, such as language, images, sounds, and movements. According to Pratiwy & Wulan (2018) MDA exists as an approach to the study of discourse that combines language with various other sources, such as images, scientific symbols, movements, actions, music, and sound. In line with this opinion, Mesinioti (2025) explained that MDA is an approach that examines how meaning is constructed through various semiotic sources, such as gazes, facial expressions, hand gestures, images, spatial arrangements, and the use of objects. When one mode is not able to convey the meaning clearly, then another mode is needed to clarify the message so that the meaning can be

understood (Hong, 2012). Thus, MDA becomes a comprehensive approach to understanding how meaning is shaped as a whole through the relationships between modes of communication.

To understand the meaning more deeply and critically, an approach is needed that not only looks at the relationship between modes of communication, but also examines how discourse shapes and maintains power relations and social inequality. According to van Dijk (2015) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a discourse analysis study that focuses on how the abuse of power and social inequality are formed, maintained, justified, and fought through texts and speech in social and political contexts. Through CDA, language is understood not only as a means of communication, but also as a means that can influence the way people think and perceive a social context. CDA also examines how discourse continues to contribute to shaping and sustaining broader social structures, as well as uncovering the cultural and ideological meanings hidden within it (Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019). According to Dey (2021) CDA has a strong view of ideology and power in social life, as well as how language plays a role in uncovering, maintaining, and shaping these relationships. Thus, Critical Discourse Analysis helps to see how language works in social life, particularly in building and maintaining power and social inequality.

In line with this view, liberal feminism exists as a perspective that highlights how gender inequality is shaped and maintained through unequal social structures and cultural practices. This feminism focuses on achieving

gender equality through legal and political policy changes, while remaining within a liberal democratic system (Ansari, 2023). Liberal feminists believe that society still holds the false assumption that women are naturally less intelligent or stronger than men. Because of this belief, women are often treated unfairly in education, discussions and the workplace. As Tong (2009) states, “women's subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal restrictions that block women's entry and success in the so-called public world”. Liberal feminism believes that freedom and equality should be based on rationality. It believes that women and men are equal, with no fundamental differences. Therefore, they fight for gender equality through legal and policy changes, while still working within the existing social system. They may fight for equality through popular media, such as music videos.

Music videos are an effective medium to express and spread social and ideological messages. Music videos are considered a powerful tool for transmitting ideas, not only reaching a wide range of audiences, but also using multiple modes of communication such as linguistic and visual (López, 2017). Music videos also play a role in the gender socialization process. According to McKenna (2006) music videos have a huge influence on youth culture and are an important place to see how society shapes and displays views on gender. In the context of today's controversial society, feminism and music videos have merged into a powerful form of activism. Some of the female pop artists who have voiced feminism through their music videos are Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, Meghan Trainor, Katy Perry, and so on (Martiwi et al., 2017).

The song *Run the World (Girls)* by Beyoncé is one of the music videos that visually and lyrically portrays women as strong, independent, and capable of leading social change on equal footing with men. The Music Videos features presents of women taking over spaces of power, resisting male domination, and asserting control over their own bodies and voices. This is in line with the tenets of liberal feminism, which advocates for equality between women and men in rights, opportunities, and individual courage. One of the main visible features is how the women in the video are positioned as active rather than passive objects. They wear military-style clothing and stand tall facing uniformed male troops, symbolizing strength, courage and leadership. According to Guo (2023) The dance of women resembling soldiers, accompanied by music, is a powerful form of expression. In this way, women's power can be better appreciated, and messages about women's equality and identity can be conveyed more clearly and widely. Lyric in the song, such as "*Who run the world? Girls!*", act as a form of affirmation for female leadership. In addition, the use of aesthetic elements such as coordinated mass dancing also demonstrates women's solidarity and unity, challenging the notion that women are always competing against each other.

Several previous studies have talked about the representation of feminism in various media, such as novels, movies, and music videos. The first study is Purwarno et al. (2021)'s research on novels. They analyzed the representation of liberal feminism in *Ika Natassa's Critical Eleven*. This research focuses on three main aspects of liberal feminism, namely women's

equality in the world of work, education, and political rights. The main character, Anya, is portrayed as a modern woman who is independent, intelligent, and able to make professional decisions without relying on men. The second study is Kadek et al. (2021). This study aims to identify aspects of liberal feminism in the novel *Mulan's Secret Plan* by Tessa Roehl. Using Tong's (2008) theory of liberal feminism, this study finds that Mulan's character fights for equal education and equal liberty, such as her desire to obtain an education equal to men and the freedom to choose what she wants in life. This research highlights how Mulan's character struggles to break through the gender role restrictions that prevailed in ancient Chinese patriarchal society.

Previous researchs shows that films can represent liberal feminism values through the female characters they portray. The research conducted by Tambotto (2023) analyzed the character of Carly Whitten in the film *The Other Woman* (2014) as a representation of liberal feminism, especially in the aspect of personal autonomy developed by Amy Baehr (2007). This study found that the character of Carly, a successful and independent lawyer, strongly represents the values of liberal feminism such as independence, hard work, intelligence, support for fellow women, and assertiveness in making decisions. The researcher concluded that Carly's actions reflect a woman's personal autonomy in choosing her own life, breaking unhealthy relationships, and supporting justice for fellow women. The next study by Desmawati (2018). The researcher analyzed the types of feminism presented by female characters in the classic novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. This study identified four types of

feminism in the novel, namely liberal feminism, marxist feminism, existentialist feminism, and radical feminism. The main findings show that liberal feminism dominates the narrative, especially in how the female characters work hard, are economically independent, and express their freedom to fulfill their personal needs.

From what happens with liberal feminism in various media, there are several studies that discuss liberal feminism using a multimodal approach, such as by Salsabila & Suyudi (2023). This research aims to identify the representation of liberal feminism values in Katy Perry's Music Videos *Part of Me* using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach. This research combines Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar theory and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The researcher analyzed five excerpts of scenes in the MV and found that values such as gender equality, women's independence, and personal autonomy are displayed through colors, body movements, settings, and visual narratives. In the military training scene and the active role of women in the field of duty, it seems to show that women can have equal roles and strengths with men. Further research by Rahmawati & Suyudi (2023). The researcher used MCDA to examine the MV *God is a Woman* and found the dominance of post-modern and radical feminism ideologies, especially through symbols of bodily freedom and female superiority in the visuals and narratives of the song.

Several previous studies have shown that liberal feminism has been widely applied in various forms of media, ranging from novels, movies, to

music videos. However, most of these studies tend to focus solely on text-based media or visual representations, without fully exploring the multimodal nature of digital media. One of researchers conducted by Salsabila & Suyudi (2023) have begun to incorporate a multimodal approach, but the analysis still emphasizes the visual aspect and has not been in-depth in looking at the interaction between communication modes. In addition, there are still minimal studies that apply Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to reveal the ideology of liberal feminism in popular media products that have various symbols and ideological meanings such as Beyoncé's *Run the World (Girls)* music video.

This study tries to find gaps in previous research on feminism in literary works using the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis approach. Based on a study conducted by Salsabila & Suyudi (2023), It can be noted that studies on liberal feminism still mostly focus on text-based media such as novels and films, so they have not fully considered the character of multimodal communication in audiovisual media, especially Music Video. As a result, the character of multimodal communication that characterizes audiovisual media has not received adequate attention, especially in the context of Music Video which combines elements of language, visuals, sound, and motion simultaneously. Although there are studies that examine feminism in Music Video using a multimodal approach, the analysis conducted generally still focuses on visual aspects and has not studied in depth the interaction between modes of communication such as language, movement, sound, and visuals in

an integrated manner. In addition, there is still limited research that integrates a multimodal approach with a critical perspective to uncover the power relations and liberal ideology of feminism in popular media, thus opening up opportunities for this research to fill this gap.

In addition, existing multimodal studies tend to focus on other strands of feminist ideology, such as radical and postmodern feminism. As a result, research that specifically examines the ideology of liberal feminism through a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach remains limited. According to Tong (2009), liberal feminism emphasizes individual freedom, equal rights, and women's autonomy in making life choices, making it highly relevant for analysis within popular media texts. From a multimodal perspective, O'Halloran (2008a) argues that meaning in multimodal discourse is not produced by a single semiotic mode, but emerges from the dynamic interaction of multiple semiotic resources, including language, visual imagery, and bodily actions. Therefore, the analysis of feminist ideology in music videos requires an integrative approach that accounts for the interplay between these modes. To date, only a small number of studies have applied MCDA to explore the representation of liberal feminism in Beyoncé's *Run the World (Girls)* music video, despite the video's rich use of lyrics, visual symbols, and gestures that portray women's resistance and empowerment. Consequently, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing how the ideology of liberal feminism is constructed through the integration of linguistic, visual, and gestural modes in

Run the World (Girls) using O'Halloran's Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis framework.

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that MCDA, MDA, and CDA are interrelated and complementary in understanding how meaning, ideology, and power relations are constructed through various forms of communication, while liberal feminism becomes an ideological lens to read these meanings critically. MDA serves as an initial foundation that explains that meaning is not only formed through language, but also through a combination of other modes such as visual, sound, gesture, and space, so that the message is understood in its entirety. MCDA then developed this approach by adding a critical dimension, which is to reveal how the use of these various modes can contain hidden ideologies and subtly shape the audience's point of view. The CDA complements both with a sharper focus on language, power, and social inequality, so that the analysis stops not only at how meaning is constructed, but also at who benefits and is disadvantaged by the construction of that meaning. In this context, liberal feminism becomes a relevant ideological framework for interpreting the findings of the MCDA, MDA, and CDA, as it emphasizes the issues of equality, freedom, and rejection of gender discrimination. By combining the four, the analysis can comprehensively reveal how women's representation and gender equality values are constructed in a multimodal manner while being associated with the power relations and ideologies that work behind them.

B. Research Focus

This study focuses on how liberal feminist ideology is represented and constructed in Beyonce's music video titled *Run the World (Girls)* through a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach. The main focus of this study is to analyze textual mode such as song lyrics, visual mode such as images, colors, camera, and gestural elements such as body movements and facial expressions, and multiple semiotic mode such as lyrics, images, color, camera, and gesture. These three mode are analyzed to see how the meanings of liberal feminism in power aspect, equality, and freedom. Using O'Halloran's multimodal framework, this study emphasizes that the meaning of feminism is not formed by one element alone, but emerges from the relationships and interactions between various semiotic modes. In addition, Tong's liberal feminist theory is used as an ideological basis for understanding how women in these music videos are portrayed as active, independent, rational figures who have equal rights and status with men. Through this focus, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how liberal feminist values are constructed multimodally in popular media.

C. Problems of the Study

The research questions of this study are:

1. How is liberal feminism based on the textual analysis of *Run the World (Girls)* music video?

2. How is liberal feminism based on the visual analysis of *Run the World (Girls)* music video?
3. How is liberal feminism based on a multiple semiotic of *Run the World (Girls)* music video?

D. Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To analyze liberal feminism on the textual mode in *Run the World (Girls)* music video.
2. To analyze liberal feminism on the visual mode in *Run the World (Girls)* music video.
3. To explain liberal feminism on the interaction of multiple semiotic modes in *Run the World (Girls)* music video.

E. Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by applying O'Halloran's multimodal framework in analyzing liberal representations of feminism in *the Run the World* music video by Beyoncé. This research also enriches the study of feminism in the media by presenting a multimodal perspective to reveal how the liberal ideology of feminism is developed through the relationship between visual and textual modes.

Practically, the results of this research are expected to increase the critical awareness of students and the public in understanding the

representation of gender ideology in music videos. In addition, this research can be a reference for educators, researchers, and other parties who are interested in applying the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis approach in analyzing media texts, especially those related to the issue of feminism and women's representation in popular culture.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis provides an important framework for understanding language as a social practice that builds and is influenced by power, ideology, and socio-cultural context. This approach enables researchers to uncover the hidden meanings behind texts and how language plays a role in reproducing social reality.

2. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is an approach to discourse analysis that considers that ideology is not only conveyed through language, but can be through various other modes such as visuals, symbols, gestures, and spatial planning. This approach aims to uncover and critique how meaning and ideology are constructed using a combination of language and visual elements in media texts.

3. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Discourse Analysis is an important approach in discourse studies because it enables an understanding of meaning constructed through a combination of various modes of communication,

such as language, visuals, and movement. Through the interaction between these modes, MDA helps to reveal meaning in a more comprehensive and contextual way.

4. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an important approach for understanding how language functions not only as a tool for communication, but also as a means of shaping ideology and power relations within society. Through this approach, meaning in discourse can be examined more critically to reveal hidden social inequalities..

5. Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism demands freedom, equality, rights, opportunities, and treatment between women and men. Its main focus is on education, employment, and politics, and the elimination of gender discrimination.

6. Music Videos

Music videos, also known as MVs, are audio-visual shows that combine music/songs with moving images to convey messages and reinforce the meaning of the song. MVs can be found on several platforms, one of which is Youtube.

7. *Run the World (Girls)*

Run the World (Girls) is one of the MVs by Beyoncé an American pop singer. This MV depicts women who have power and are able to fight against male domination.

8. Beyoncé

Beyoncé is an American singer and popular cultural figure who has global influence in the music industry and women's representation in the media. One of her popular music videos, *Run the World (Girls)*, represents a narrative about feminism by featuring women as strong, independent, and empowered.